

Weather Review: Louisiana, 2001

A wet weather regime returned to the Bayou State for 2001. Louisiana's statewide-weighted annual rainfall for 2001 totaled 68 inches, 8 inches above the 1971-2000 normal. From a statewide perspective, 2001 ranks as the tenth wettest year in more than a century and is the wettest year since 1991 (the state's all-time wettest year, with a state-average total of more than 80 inches). The wet weather pattern of 2001 was especially appreciated by many agricultural, forestry and water-resource related interests across the central and southern parishes as it bought closure to the 1998-2000 La Niña-driven drought, arguably one of Louisiana's most severe droughts of the 20th Century.

The New Year opened with north Louisiana residents waking to snowcover! One to four inches of snow was common across the northern parishes, with isolated reports of 6 inch accumulations. Seasonal rainfall totals were well-above average for the northwestern quarter of the state, while southeastern parishes reported winter totals of only 50 to 60 percent of normal, ranking among the ten driest winters in more than 100 years for many of those areas. A very dry weather pattern became established over the state during April and May, prompting fears that the extensive drought of the three previous years would redevelop.

All drought concerns were wiped away during the first half of June by remnants of Tropical Storm *Allison* (June 4-11). This system dumped more than 20 inches of rain - roughly four month's worth of precipitation - in parts of at least 15 parishes in just a week's time; Allison ranks among the top five greatest rainfall events for the Pelican State. June's statewide average monthly rainfall of 12 inches proved to be the second greatest June total on record - and the ninth greatest total for any month - in more than 100 years! The year closed with unusually warm weather during November and December.

January: 2001 opened with cool weather, as January monthly temperatures averaged near 45° F, two degree below the norm. Statewide rainfall averaged 5½ inches, with totals one or more inches above normal in the north and west but one or more inches below the mean for many southeastern parishes.

February: For the second consecutive month, rainfall was above-normal for many northern parishes but below normal for the southern half of the state. Although monthly average temperatures were well-above normal, three Arctic outbreaks during February produced hard freezes across the northern parishes.

March: Monthly temperatures averaged in the mid 50s, four degrees below the norm. Monthly rainfall ranged from eight to 12 inches across the Bayou State, ending soil-moisture shortages across south Louisiana while pushing numerous north Louisiana waterways into flood stage.

April: Statewide-averaged rainfall totaled less than two inches, less than half the norm. Monthly temperatures averaged near 70° F, with most sites reaching the upper 80s to low 90s on one or more days.

May: Monthly temperatures averaged in the mid 70s, near normal for the month. April's dry weather pattern continued into May, as statewide monthly rainfall again averaged under two inches for May, less than 40 percent of normal.

June: Drought conditions all but disappeared due to the flooding produced by remnants of *Tropical Storm Allison* (June 4-11). June rainfall was above normal statewide, with monthly totals of 15 or more inches reported across many southeastern and south central parishes.

July: Monthly rains were generally near-normal for southeastern parishes but one to two inches below normal elsewhere. Warmer than normal weather was the rule, with afternoon temperatures reaching the triple-digits for northern parishes, prompting National Weather Service *Heat Advisories* for the northern half of the state through the second half of the month.

August: Station rainfall totals during August ranged from less than two to more than twelve inches! Average August temperatures were near normal, running in the low 80s statewide. Although there were no tropical events, severe weather outbreaks during the month included river flooding in the eastern Florida Parishes at mid-month and flood damage to homes in the Lake Charles area at month's end.

September: September rainfall totals ranged from less than three inches for a dozen stations in the eastern half of the state to more than twelve inches for areas of southwestern and southcentral Louisiana, resulting in more flooding along several waterways in the southwestern parishes.

October: Cooler than normal conditions prevailed, with a statewide average temperature of 65° F. Once again, rainfall variability was a factor as monthly station totals ranged from three to ten inches across the state. A run of severe weather days between October 11-14 included at least a half-dozen tornado touchdowns in the southeastern quarter of the state, with rains of six to eight inches resulting in flooding along a number of Louisiana waterways.

November: Temperatures averaged in the low 60s, more than three degrees above the mean. Rainfall averaged six inches for the state, but once again, station totals ranged from less than two to more than twelve inches for the month. More than a dozen tornadoes were reported across the state during November, and excessive rains near month's end produced area flooding in a number of parishes.

December: Monthly station totals ranged from seven to ten inches in the northwestern quarter of the state down to less than three inches for several parishes in the southeast. December was another warm month by winter standards, with the statewide monthly average temperature of 54° F being nearly three degrees above the mean.